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The American MUSIC LOVER

The Record Connoisseur's Magazine

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Edited by PETER HUGH REED

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ASTOR, LENOX AND
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VOL. IX, No. 1

Editorial Notes

In the folk music of a nation we find racial characteristics expressed in a very definite way. The historical migration of people can be traced in folk music; so that we find, for example, echoes of the music of many European peoples in our own folk tunes. A striking example of the influences of various European peoples has been shown in the popular radio broadcast of Josef Marais and his so-called Bushveld Band. For the songs of the South African Veld which he sings, although indigenous to the lower part of Africa, are none the less reminiscent of the folk music of all the countries from which the settlers in that part of the world originally came.

In times as disrupted as these, folk music takes on a new significance. Through folk music lies a road to greater musical appreciation. For in folk music lies the germ of all music. Percy A. Scholes, the eminent musicologist, says, "Every form of vocal and instrumental music we possess has developed out of folk song or dance, and it is no more possible to make a balanced and comprehensive study of the history of music without an examination of the treasures of folk tune than it is to make a similar study of literature without an examination of folk poems and folk tales. The simplest way of asserting this truth, perhaps, is to put it that folk

music represents the culture of the countryside and art music the culture of the city, and that no complete understanding of life is possible to man who knows it only in its city complexities." Perhaps no time was more propitious for development of an acquaintance with folk music. It is the people of the country throughout the world who are in the limelight today, and it is the simple, homelike culture of these people that we find expressed in folk music.

Most countries have preserved the folk music of their peoples in government archives. In the past fifty years great efforts have been made by various men to preserve the folk tunes of their respective countries. One recalls the work of such men as the Hungarians Bartok and Kodaly, and the Rumanian Enesco. Towards the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, such men as the late Cecil Sharp, Vaughan Williams, and the Rev. John Broadwood among others pursued the collection of English folk music, taking the material down from the lips of people and from their fiddles and dances. All of this was done, according to Scholes, "probably just in time to save a great mass of beautiful material."

It is good to see that some of the recording companies have turned to folk music for the issuance of some unusual

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albums. Such a set as the *Russian Folk Songs*, sung by Kipnis this month, deserves to be widely known. We should have others like it; others which stem from worthy performers of their own countries. It was the interest of one or two South American readers in our own folk music which prompted us to go out and investigate some of the material that has been put on records by the smaller companies.

Only in recent years has any widespread movement to collect American folk tunes begun. John A. and Alan Lomax were probably as responsible as anyone for the realization of a collection of folk recordings now available in the Library of Congress in Washington, D. C. Back in 1933 these two started out with a portable recording equipment operating on a storage battery. Later, the WPA sent out field workers, similarly equipped. Gradually a vast collection of valuable folk material was formed. In 1940, application was made to the Carnegie Foundation for funds for the construction of a recording laboratory in the Music Division of the Library of Congress for the duplication of the collection. Additional field equipment for loan to collectors outside of the Library was also provided.

Recently the Library of Congress announced the publication of the first check list of recorded songs in the English language in the archive of American Folk Song. The compilation lists all the songs and stories in English that were recorded for the Archive between 1933 and August, 1940. There are three volumes: (1) Geographical Index; (2) Alphabetical List from A to K; (3) the same from L to Z.

The recordings of all the folk songs listed were made in the field, that is, where

the singers or performers lived or worked. Fiddlers, evangelists, cotton pickers, housewives, convicts, school children, miners, hoboos, lumberjacks, etc., sang and played into the microphones of the Archives' research workers. The records are not available for loan and cannot be sent out of the building for duplication. A duplication service, however, has been set up in the form of the recording laboratory in the Music Division of the Library of Congress. Most of the songs in the list, which incidentally numbers over 10,000 titles, are freely available for personal, non-commercial or educational use to those who wish to order copies.

In order to obtain copies of any of the discs or of the catalogues, it is necessary first to write to the Archive of American Folk Song, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C. All record duplications made are of glass-bass acetate.

Alan Lomax, assistant in charge of the Archive of American Folk Song, states in the Introduction to the Alphabetical List "We have made a good beginning toward the documentation of the oral tradition of the United States which will, we believe, be of great service to scientists, educators and eventually a source of pleasure and pride to the American people whom this singing tradition belongs." Glancing over the long list of material which has been collected in most of the States as well as in the Bahamas and Haiti, we feel that Mr. Lomax and his associates have done a notable job. Such a collection of folk music is truly invaluable, for it offers an oral history of communities and peoples — many of which are altering or dying out in a rapidly changing world.

OVERTONES

Claudio Arrau, the Chilean pianist, is represented in the Argentine Odeon catalogue for June with three releases. These are DEBUSSY: *Jardins sous la pluie*, and *Danse* (disc 177262); CHOPIN: *Scherzo in C sharp minor, Op. 39* (disc 177263); and CHOPIN: *Ballade in A flat, Op. 47* (disc 177264). The Argentine Victor sup-

plement for June featured the set *Voices of the Golden Age of Opera* (domestic Victor M-816) and the Goossens Cincinnati Symphony performance of Tchaikovsky's *Symphony No. 2*. There seems to be few, if any, classical selections recorded in Buenos Aires, although there is a large group of native popular music.

The American Music Lover

A DISCOGRAPHY OF

JOH. STRAUSS

JEROME PASTENE



Material for this article was drawn from the author's forthcoming book—THREE-QUARTER TIME. Ed.

In a foreword to this writer's biography of the Strauss Family — *Three-Quarter Time*, Arthur Fielder has written: "There exists today a group of music lovers who base a preconceived prejudice on the flimsy argument that because Strauss' music is 'light' music, it is not great music. By the same token, one may assume that the Bach sarabandes and bourrées, the Handel gavottes and musettes, and the Haydn and Mozart minuets, being representative of the 'light' dance-music of their day, are essentially trivial.

"I believe I know the cause of much of this belittling of Strauss. I think it arises among those whose first interest in serious music was brought about by nothing else than the strains of the *Blue Danube* or some equally familiar waltz. I suspect that because these people associate music of this nature with their musical infancy, they are ashamed of their former attachment, and so label it infantile. If passion, desire and love are infantile, then the label is correct. For all of these mature emotions are the essence of every Strauss composition."

To this authoritative *pronunziamento*, I would add one more qualification. Another factor which determines the slight value by some upon the music of the Strausses is the great rarity with which we

are privileged to hear an authoritative performance. Such a performance demands equal understanding and collaboration on the part of conductor and musicians, and an appreciation of those intangibles which defy description and yet which are the essential ingredients in this music.

There is no dearth of capable conductors in this country today. Indeed, we have here now a man who has proved himself in his recordings the supreme master of this genre of music — Bruno Walter. He draws his affection for this musical distillation of Vienna from his former teacher, Gustav Mahler, who was, with Brahms, one of Strauss's most fervent admirers. In addition, America enjoys the presence of other leaders who have shown affinity for this music — Arthur Fiedler, who once held a first-desk seat in the orchestra of Johann Strauss III, and, to lesser degrees, men like Eugene Ormandy and Fritz Reiner.

Unfortunately, if we do not lack conductors, we do lack orchestras. Judging on the basis of existing recordings, no orchestra in this country can even remotely duplicate the comprehension of Strauss's music shown by European groups, notably and naturally the incomparable Vienna Philharmonic. Our Philadelphia Orchestra, for instance, magnificent instrument though it is, has a string tone which is no more suited to Strauss than it is to Mozart. Our Boston "Pops" Orchestra labors under difficulties equally great; remember that this

organization is in effect the Boston Symphony Orchestra minus twenty-five of its most inspired players.

Consequently, an impartial approach to the music of this fabulous family must be through recordings of performances that reveal all that is contained in the music, without distortions introduced by conductors striving for effects, and yet with a suppleness which demands as much from the performers as the 32-stave score of Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé*.

If I were to choose one disc which, because of recording technique, interpretation and execution, merits the designation of "the perfect Strauss performance on records," that disc would be the *Kaiserwalzer*, recorded by Bruno Walter and the Vienna Philharmonic (V. 13690). It is doubly fortunate that this superb performance should be of the waltz which was the finest product of Strauss's mature years, written as a token of affection for Franz Josef on his Jubilee (the official Jubilee waltz was the *Kaiserjubiläum*, some opus numbers earlier), for this work is, as Guillaume Ritter described it, "the most beautiful flower that the incredible tree of Strauss music had borne in seventy-five years." From its startlingly Mozartean opening to the exquisite passage for cello and flute which brings it to a close, this waltz-poem has a breadth of scoring which places it irrevocably in the concert-hall and makes it alien to any dance-floor. Those who believe that Strauss wrote for a small dance-orchestra, and that his music was later amplified to symphony size, are referred to the published score (Hampton Library) in which Strauss calls for an orchestra larger than that used in the symphonies of his contemporary, Brahms.

There are other versions of the *Kaiserwalzer* which have much to recommend them, such as the disc by Arthur Fiedler and the Boston "Pops" (V. 12195) — although this has an unfortunate cut in the coda — but none of these achieve the superb spirit of Walter's reading.

Closely rivalling Walter's performance of this waltz is his recording of the Overture to *Die Fledermaus* with the Paris Conservatory Orchestra (V. 13688). There is a spirit, an *élan*, here that is worthy of

the Vienna Philharmonic at its best. Especially to be recommended are the excellent woodwind passages. Walter's earlier version with the Berlin State Opera Orchestra (C. 9080-M), poorly recorded, is too rapidly paced, and no match for the new disc, but either would be greatly preferable to all other discs, including that by Ormandy and the Minneapolis Orchestra (V. 8651).

Unfortunately lost among too-frequent performances of the so-called "Great Waltzes" is one of Strauss's finest compositions, *Wo die Zitronen blühen*, whose title is drawn from a line in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, a line made famous by Ambroise Thomas as *Connais-tu le pays?* But there is no relation between the saccharine tones of the *Mignon* aria and the tender, wistful melodies of this set of waltzes, especially when it is played with consummate artistry by Arthur Fiedler and the Boston "Pops" (V. 11894), in a performance which I would not hesitate to call the best they have ever put on records. It is to their credit that the Vienna Philharmonic, in an old European recording of this work, did not make it emerge as successfully.

Arthur Fiedler and the Boston "Pops" are again represented by the finest performance of the *Perpetuum Mobile* (V. 4435), that piece which Strauss himself described as "a Perpetual Motion to end perpetual motion." Although the recording by Mengelberg and the Amsterdam Concertgebouw (C.9076-M) has much to recommend it, it lacks the exhilarating tempo that is in Fiedler's.

Despite recording that is out-dated, the superb spirit and feeling that is to be found in the Finale of the second act to *Die Fledermaus* (D. 29015) makes it a "must" in every collection. Here is the best of Strauss's genius, re-created by the stunning voices of Lotte Lehmann, Richard Tauber, Karin Branzell and a cast from the Berlin State Opera, with chorus and orchestra conducted by Frieder Weissmann. Since the retirement of the Brunswick-Polydor series denies us the abridged performance of this opera (it is still available, with better surfaces and reproduc-

tion, on English Decca-Polydor), this record becomes all the more valuable.

Although Fritz Reiner has not shown such affinity in his latest Strauss recording (the *Schatz Walzer*, reviewed recently), his reading of *Wienerblut* is one of the real treasures of recorded Straussiana, and must be given preference even over such commendable efforts as a complete version by Fiedler (V. 12193), and single-sided telescoped editions by Koussevitzky (V. 6903) and Ormandy (V. 18060). The languorous rhythms of this waltz make a perfect foil for Reiner's emphasis on *rubato*.

A musical "double-header" is the delightful combination of *Fruehlingstimmen* (*Voices of Spring*) and the *Donaulieder* (*Songs of the Danube*), the first recorded by Georg Szell, the second by Karl Alwin, both conducting the Vienna Philharmonic (V. 13597). Szell's performance, by virtue of its introductory tempo, phrasing and shading, is the undisputed choice over the discs by such celebrated conductors as Koussevitzky, Beecham, Weingartner, Ormandy, and Fiedler. The *Donaulieder*, the only waltz by Johann Strauss the Elder to reach records (all the works mentioned above are by his famous son), is a work that shows clearly the sparks of genius which the older man possessed. Like all the pioneers, it was his misfortune to be forgotten in the more perfect efforts of those who followed him, led by his sons. But little fragments, such as the question-and-answer dialogue between lower and upper strings, used again years later in the son's *Zitronen*, and the use of the trumpeter in the coda, all suggest an imagination of the richest sort.

Deeper in musical content than *Fledermaus*, if not so compelling in appeal, is the younger Strauss's Overture to *Der Zigeunerbaron*, given two superb readings by Bruno Walter, one with the London Symphony (V. 13689), and one with the Berlin State Opera Orchestra (C. 9083-M). The Victor disc is much newer, and because of its superior reproduction, is the inevitable choice, although the Berlin group is better spirited in the waltz sections, for the Londoners smack too much of roast beef and not enough of *beurriger*

Wein. But this is counterbalanced by their superior playing of those passages recalling the *lassán* and the *csardás* of Hungary.

No listing of this nature would be complete without mention of a superb disc enigmatically titled *Immortal Johann Strauss* and recorded by an unnamed "Viennese Waltz Orchestra" which I strongly suspect to be the Vienna Philharmonic itself (V. 36391). Certainly it is no café-orchestra; not with two flutes of such quality, full-symphony tone, and melting horns that recall only the glories of the great Vienna Philharmonic. Despite its strange title, this disc is nothing more than an amplified form of the *Waldmeister Overture*, the middle section being filled in with scraps from *Cagliostro in Wien*, *Prinz Methusalem*, and *Ritter Pasmán*. An unknown "Black Label Classic," it is another of those gems too easily passed over.

Finally, although space precludes more than a mention, one cannot ignore these discs, found only in European catalogues: the abridged *Fledermaus* (Decca-Polydor); Elisabeth Schumann's disc of two arias from this opera, *Mein Herr Marquis* and *Spiel' Ich die Unschuld vom Lande* (H. M. V.); the Melichar-Berlin Philharmonic version of *By the Beautiful Blue Danube* (Decca-Polydor); and the same group's complete recording, with zither solos, of *Tales from the Vienna Woods* (Decca-Polydor). No one who has never heard this last waltz played in the original orchestration of the composer, has any idea of its nostalgic beauties, its irresistible sentiment.*

* It has always been one of the editor's most poignant regrets that no recording was ever made of what he holds to be the finest performance of a Strauss waltz in his entire experience. The place was Carnegie Hall, the orchestra the New York Philharmonic, the conductor Erich Kleiber, and the occasion Kleiber's farewell appearance with that organization. That night the Philharmonic men surpassed themselves, and Kleiber's every wish was realized instantaneously and with such completeness that one had the impression that he was playing directly upon the orchestra, as Kreisler plays upon the fiddle. Never have we heard the *Blue Danube* performed with such richness of nuance, with such *rubato*. It seemed to us that we were hearing the huckneyed old piece for the first time. Everyone was in the mood, and we shall not forget the happy glances that passed between the men and their conductor after the final chord, or the cheers of the enchanted audience. Kleiber's recording of this waltz with the Berlin Philharmonic (Telefunken) is good, but it is nothing like the one he gave that memorable night. — Editor.

MORE

FOLK MUSIC

RECORDINGS



SONGS OF NEW CHINA — *Chee Lai!* (*Arise!*); *Feng Yang*; *Chinese Soldiers' Song*; *Riding the Dragon*; sung by Paul Robeson with piano accompaniment, and *Work As One!*; *Chinese Farmers' Song*; *Song of the Guerrillas*; sung by Chinese Chorus conducted by Lui Liang-mo. Keynote set 109, three 10-inch discs, price \$2.50.

▲ These recordings, made in cooperation with the China Aid Council participating in United China Relief, offer some of the songs of New China. The conductor of the chorus, Liu Liang-mo, tells us that there are three types of songs in this album: "(1) folk tunes in the ancient Chinese style; (2) music in the Occidental manner; (3) songs that combine Oriental and Occidental tunes. Of the three, I think the last - named has the brightest future in China. Blended songs do not sound strange to our ears, but neither do they have the weak and wailing quality of Eastern music. We do not wait today, for we know that our fate rests in our own hands."

Chee Lai!, the first song, was composed in 1933 after the invasion of Manchuria. Paul Robeson tells us it is on the lips of millions of Chinese today, a sort of unofficial national anthem, typifying the unconquerable spirit of the people. This song, earnestly sung by Robeson in both Chinese and English, is thoroughly occidental in conception. Its composer, Nyi Erh, died mysteriously in Japan in 1935 at the age

of 23, but his spirit goes on in his music. The other songs rendered by Robeson are mostly old tunes fitted out with new words. *Feng Yang* is a symbol of almost any Chinese town suffering the weight of Japanese oppression and looking forward to freedom in a new China. *Riding the Dragon* is a children's song, preserving the ancient words. The rich bass voice of Paul Robeson lends dignity and appeal to these strange folk songs. He voices all with equal earnestness and simplicity. His short announcements before each are curiously not inappropriate.

The occidental influence predominates in the songs of the Chinese Chorus. Perhaps the most immediately appealing of these is the favorite song of the Chinese guerilla fighters expressing joy at outwitting the Japanese. It is full of boisterous humor, and its opening stanza reads:

"Go behind the Japanese
And kick them in the pants!
Behind the enemies
And kick them in the pants!"

The Chinese Chorus is somewhat raucous, but it conveys the spirit of its numbers with healthy exuberance. The records are divided, with a song by Robeson on one side and a chorus on the other. The reproduction is satisfactorily achieved. Royalties and part of the proceeds from the sale of these songs are remitted to the China Aid Council.

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THE OLD CHISHOLM TRAIL — *Songs of the American Southwest*; sung by Tony Kraber. Keynote album No. 104, three 10-inch discs, price \$2.50.

▲ Tony Kraber is what might be called a natural born singer of the people. Since he spent a good part of his childhood on farms and ranches, where one of his daily chores was to milk eight cows and turn them back to pasture before breakfast, it is not surprising to find him a singer of cowboy tunes. Among other things, Tony tells us, he has been a sailor, bartender, bookkeeper, harvest hand, and actor. But always he has been a singer of songs. Tony's abilities as an actor stand him in good stead in his voicing of several of the airs in this album. Blessed with a pleasantly rich baritone voice, he sings with a spontaneity and gusto which make his recordings particularly enjoyable. Moreover, he accompanies himself adeptly on the guitar. What we liked about Tony was his assurance and the obvious enjoyment he seemed to get out of each number, and the fact that he did not lapse into yodeling or any other offensive falsetto tricks.

The songs here are: *The Old Chisholm Trail*; *Green Grow the Lilacs* (disc K505); *Whiskey, Rye Whiskey*; *The Tenderfoot*; *Blood on the Saddle* (disc K506); *The Boll Weevil Song*; *The Next Big River*; *Kansas Boys* (disc K507). Tony knows how to put over a tough song like *Whiskey, Rye Whiskey*, a gory one like *Blood on the Saddle*, or a tender love song like the haunting *Green Grow the Lilacs*. Perhaps his realism in the first two will displease some, but what he puts into all these songs is no more than what the boys of the western plains put there originally, and, to our way of thinking, it is good to have these folk tunes brought to life in this manner. There's been too much prettifying of folk tunes, and particularly of cowboy songs, by singers who wear tricky silk shirts and leather pants and large felt hats. Tony wouldn't get away with some of his performances on the radio, but this fact makes his records the more enjoyable. Recording here is good.

WORK SONGS OF THE UNITED STATES; sung by Lead Belly (Huddie Ledbetter), accompanying himself on the guitar and the accordion. Asch Record Set, three 10-inch discs, price \$3.15. (Asch Recording Studios, 117 West 46 St., New York City).

PLAY PARTIES IN SONG AND DANCE; sung by Lead Belly, accompanying himself. Asch Record Set, three 10-inch discs, price \$2.62.

▲ Lead Belly is a one-man institution. John and Alan Lomax, who have written a book about him — *Negro Folk Songs as Sung by Lead Belly* (Macmillan), have termed him a very talented and highly individual Negro folk artist. His name will be found in the collection of the Archive of American Folk Song at the Library of Congress. As a source of secular folk material of the deep South, there are perhaps few repertoires that can compete with his. He has been widely featured on the air, on such programs as "The American School of the Air" (Columbia network) and a sustaining program called *Back Where I Came From* (NBC network). He has performed at leading universities, and the "March of Time" has made a movie featuring him. Lead Belly knows all the songs of the Negro folk, secular or "sinful" songs, work songs and convict songs. His repertoire is said to cover eighty years of Negro secular music. Those who already own the album of *Negro Sinful Songs*, which the singer made for Musicraft (set No. 31), will unquestionably be interested in these two sets. Those who have not heard him will do well to investigate his work.

Lead Belly is not blessed with much of a voice, but what voice he possesses he uses skilfully. Once in a while he has trouble landing in the middle of a low tone, but he never growls or resorts to forcing the meagre vocal equipment he possesses. What is it that makes him so interesting and unusual as a folk singer, outside of his material? Perhaps it is his fine gift of rhythmic impetus, his unmistakable and obvious enjoyment in singing the old folk tunes. For Lead Belly is a real Negro troubadour.

Jean Evans in a preface to the *Play Parties* tells us something about this unique singer, who is now in his fifty-seventh year. When he was a little boy, she says, "he lived on a farm near Mooringsport, Louisiana. He worked in the fields with his father and mother, and there learned the songs that Negro people sing to make the long day go faster. On warm evenings, when all the people in the community came riding in wagons, on mule and horseback, and walking on foot, lighting their way with lanterns, to sing and dance and play together, Huddie learned another kind of singing — the play party. In those days, many white folks believed that musical instruments were works of the devil. And so they made their own music for dancing and playing musical games, and these songs and parties at which they were sung, were called play parties. The Negro people did not believe that musical instruments were sinful, but they liked the songs the white people made so much that they adopted them and called them *suki-jumps* because they were gay."

Lead Belly at 16 not only knew hundreds of songs but was one of the best accordion players in his part of the country. Leaving his home, he followed the paths of the rambling singers, from whom he learned much. Fracasés have at various times landed the singer in jails throughout the country; but always his skill in

singing and playing the accordion and guitar have earned him a parole. But all his prison sojourns have added to his repertoire.

In such work songs as *Corn Bread Rough* and *Ol' Riley* (old slave songs), the singer's style and feeling is quite inimitable. This group contains a good cross section of workers' songs — *Take This Hammer* (an old plantation number), *Rock Island Line* (an old railroad song), *Haul Away Joe* (a short-drag shanty), and *Old Man* (a shanty sung on the levees).

The six traditional play party songs are full of quaint humor and rhythmic gaiety. Some of them are familiar to American children, and several are songs brought to this country by English and other foreign settlers. The melodies are all catchy, and if you find yourself humming these tunes along with or after hearing the Lead Belly discs don't be surprised. They are that kind of songs.

The titles are: *Ha Ha This Way* (a Negro adaption of an old singing game called *Did You Ever See a Lassie Go this Way*); *Little Sally Walker*; *Redbird*; *Christmas Song*; *Skip To My Lou*; and *You Can't Lose Me Cholly* (a nonsense song Lead Belly made up when he was a little boy).

Both albums has been well recorded, and the surfaces of the discs are all good.

OVERTONES

The following discs were issued in England during August:

BIZET: *L'Arlésienne Suite No. 1*; Malcolm Sargent and Hallé Orchestra. Columbia DX-1085/87.

BRIDGE: *Love Went A-Riding*; and COLERIDGE - TAYLOR: *Eleanor*; Henry Wendon (tenor) with Gerald Moore (piano). Columbia DB-2083.

CHOPIN: *Ballade No. 1 in G minor*; Eileen Joyce (piano). Columbia DX-1084.

FAÛRE: *Soir*, and *Les Roses d'Isphahan*; Maggie Teyte (soprano) with Gerald Moore (piano). H.M.V. DA-1819.

KENNEDY-FRASER: *Songs of the Hebrides* — *An Eriskey Love Lilt*, *The River Calling*; *Land of Heart's Desire*; *Bloweth the West Wind*; Astra Desmond (contralto) with Maria Korchinska (harp). Decca K-978.

QUILTER: *Now Sleeps the Crimson Petal*; and GRAVES: *Love at my Heart*; Paul Robeson (bass). H.M.V. B-9281.

SCHUBERT: *Sonata in A minor, Opus 164*; Kathleen Long (piano). Decca K-1067/68.

TCHAIKOVSKY: *Eugen Onegin* — *Len-ski's Aria*; and FLOTOW: *Marta* — *M'appari*; Sergei Lemeshev (tenor). Decca F-8154.

MORE ABOUT

FREQUENCIES

LELAND L. CHAPMAN



Our article in the May, 1942, issue, in which we discussed the frequency response that may be expected from a commercial record at different diameters on the record, has been very provocative. A number of engineers have agreed with our statements and complimented us for bringing these facts to light. A dissenting opinion, however, has been filed by Mr. Thomas E. Lynch, an engineer in Cleveland, Ohio.

Mr. Lynch states that the normal recording characteristic is 0.002" maximum amplitude cut at a point between 300 and 500 cycles, and above this point the characteristic slopes off 6 db per octave. This means that at 10,000 cycles, and taking into account the lowered energy content at higher frequencies, it is necessary to have an amplitude of only 0.000003" for a full recording level at 10,000 cycles at a diameter of 3". By means of mathematical derivations, Mr. Lynch then shows that a stylus having a radius of 0.0025" will track an amplitude seven times greater than the 0.000003" amplitude necessary for full recording level.

The point we meant to make in our earlier article was not that the amplitude in the recorded high frequencies was too great to track; we were concerned with the relation of the finite size of the stylus to the small wave length of the recorded high frequencies at small diameters. But this may be one and the same thing. A non-technical person can visualize what we have in mind (this example is exaggerated, of course, to make the point clear) if he will imagine trying to drag a pointed telegraph pole through a plowed furrow without erasing the small undulations in

the earth on the side of the furrow.

But we do not find it necessary to disagree with Mr. Lynch's mathematical derivations or his statement regarding amplitude, because Mr. Lynch appears to be concerned with what is *theoretically* possible, whereas our article was concerned with the practical recording system as the amateur finds it today in commercial records. If the discussion is limited to present day commercial practices, even Mr. Lynch apparently does not disagree with us. He says:

"... Therefore, it is possible to record and reproduce to 10,000 cycles and beyond, if the recording companies wished to take the trouble. The catch is that the combination of crushed concrete and broken pottery which is used for pressing material is incapable of a background noise level which would make it either possible or desirable to listen to such an extended range. Why extend the range, when the random noise of the record material itself is far more than the expected signal amplitude at the high frequencies?"

Mr. Lynch is saying that the earth in which the furrow is plowed is rocky and the rocks that project on the sides of the furrow are bigger than the sound undulations engraved.

It has long been a chicken vs. the egg argument as to which should come first, improved records or improved pick-ups. Pick-up manufacturers think, as does Mr. Lynch, that their products are pretty good or at least they say in effect, "Why should we make better pick-ups until better records are made?" The record manufacturers in effect say, "Why should we make bet-

ter and more expensive records, when the pick-ups in the average home today would soon erase higher frequencies or would not produce them with superior results?" We cannot undertake to arbitrate this issue. Our earlier article was not intended necessarily as a criticism of the record companies for not placing higher frequencies in the records, but rather as a statement of fact so that a listener might not be deceived into believing that he was hearing something that he was not. It is our opinion, however, that the fault does not lie solely with the record manufacturers.

We recall reading with interest the development of Messrs. Hunt and Pierce of the Cruft Laboratory of Harvard University, which may throw more light on the matter. The Cruft Laboratory was commissioned to make transcriptions of the proceedings of Harvard's Tercentenary. They were undoubtedly made on acetate or some similar abrasive-free material. By means of an optical method, before the transcriptions were played, they were found to have recorded frequencies at least as high as 10,000 cycles per second. Messrs. Hunt and Pierce stated in an article published in "Electronics" for March, 1938, that fortunately they did not play these records back with a conventional reproducer and therefore the reproducer was not given an opportunity to "erase these high frequencies from our records." They then undertook to make a pick-up with a needle pressure of 0.17 oz. (so that the weight of the stylus point would be less than the elastic limit of the material) and with a response which was flat (3 db) from 30 to 18,000 cycles. Mr. Lanier has often referred to this pick-up in his articles and expressed a wish that it would be placed on the market. This pick-up is so different in design and principle of operation from the crystal and magnetic armature pick-ups that are conventional today as to suggest the conclusion that a pick-up which will operate satisfactorily on non-abrasive records having high frequencies of very low amplitude would be quite different from the pick-ups on the market today and available on the average home phonograph.

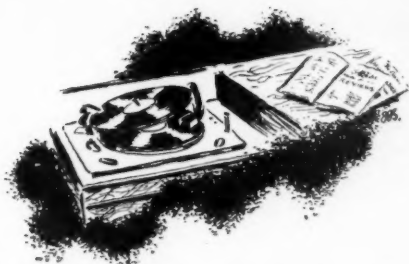
Messrs. Hunt and Pierce conclude that the limitations on frequency response, the need for abrasives in the records, and other limitations that are often cited as undesirable "should be charged principally to the reproducers available rather than to the recording and pressing methods."

Further progress in recordings with extended frequency range, we believe, will be slow. In the first place it is admitted apparently by all concerned that such records would have to be made out of abrasive-free material and these would be more expensive. There is also some question as to whether these records would wear satisfactorily for home use.

With the emphasis today on lower prices, and with keen competition in the industry, it seems unlikely that manufacturers could be convinced that prices should be raised in the absence of a genuine public clamor for extended frequency range. There might be the possibility of pressing a "connoisseur" edition on abrasive-free material and selling these at an increased price to satisfy the demands of the purists who are willing to provide themselves with pick-ups that will not erase the high frequencies, and with amplifiers, speakers and so forth, that will reproduce them.

We cannot state any conclusive facts on the basis of tests, but our information from a variety of sources leads to the conclusion that if a record manufacturer recorded 10,000 cycles at a diameter of 3" at a permissive amplitude on an abrasive-free disc, such a frequency would be erased or so radically altered in wave form as to introduce noticeable distortion when played half a dozen times with any pick-up of the type comprising 75% of those now on home phonograph machines. We cannot advise how this is to be improved or who should do it.

Our mission, as we view it, is to advance the interests of the phonograph listeners and if by discussion and a revelation of their ideas and wishes we can spur either the records companies or the pick-up manufacturers, or both, to make the improvements the listeners want, we shall feel that our task has been well accomplished.



RECORD NOTES AND

REVIEWS

It is the purpose of this department to review monthly all worthwhile recordings. If at any time we happen to omit a record in which the readers is particularly interested, we shall be glad to give our opinion of the recording on written request. Correspondents are requested to enclose self-addressed stamped envelopes.

We believe that record buyers would do well to order by title rather than by number such items as they may wish to purchase. Numbers are sometimes printed incorrectly in our sources.

All prices given are without tax.

Orchestra

GRIEG: *Peer Gynt Suite No. 2*; played by the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, direction of Fabien Sevitzy. Victor set M-902, two discs, price \$2.50.

▲ The *Peer Gynt Suite No. 1* has always overshadowed the second. It will be admitted that all four of the movements comprising the first suite are more effective as individual pieces than are those of the second. True, the *Arabian Dance* and *Solvejg's Song* stand alone apart from the play, but neither *Ingrid's Lament*—which in the theatre sets the mood for the second act — nor the *Return of Peer Gynt* is a true concert excerpt. They belong very definitely to the story. The latter piece, depicting a stormy night at sea, is a

successful bit of theatrical mood music. Since each of the four movements in the first suite can be enjoyed apart from any knowledge of the drama, it is understandable why the popularity of that suite has been greater than that of the second.

All of the previous recordings of this music date back prior to 1935. The best version was undoubtedly the sensitively playing performance of Schneevoigt, who, being of Scandanavian origin himself, had the feel of the music more than anyone else. Sevitzy gives an admirably straightforward account of this suite, and the recording is excellently devised. The string tone of the Indianapolis Symphony is especially praiseworthy in *Solvejg's Song*. The four movements of this suite are: *Ingrid's Lament*; *Arabian Dance* (disc 11-8163); *Return of Peer Gynt*; *Solvejg's Song* (disc 11-8164). —P. G.

MOUSSORGSKY (arr. Kindler): *Boris Godounov* — *Love Music, Act III*; and **SHOSTAKOVICH**: *Polka from The Age of Gold (Ballet)*; played by the National Symphony Orchestra, direction of Hans Kindler. Victor disc 11-8239, price \$1.00.

▲ The *Love Duet* between Marina and Demetrius, which occurs in the Garden of the Castle Sandomir, is by no means among the best pages of Moussorgsky's *Boris*, and one suspects that its sentimental

qualities were enhanced by Rimsky-Korsakov. This is the scene in which Marina persuades the pretender to enter Moscow and put himself on the throne in place of Boris. It can be said, however, that Kindler has made a practical transcription of this music, which will probably appeal to admirers of this music. There is room, incidentally, for a new recording of the *Love Duet* from *Boris* by a couple of gifted singers. Perhaps Miss Thorborg and Mr. Crooks could be got together for such a recording.

The Shostakovich *Polka* gets its best recording here, but the hardy humor of this piece is better conveyed by Julius Ehrlich in a previous recording. Moreover, the brevity of this piece leaves a lot of space vacant on a 12-inch disc.

—P. G.

SIBELIUS: *Symphony No. 5 in E Flat Major*; played by The Cleveland Orchestra, direction of Arthur Rodzinski. Columbia set M or MM-514, price \$4.50.

▲ There is surely no conductor in Columbia's roster of artists — save Beecham, who has not recorded for American Columbia — who is as fitted to direct the symphonies of Sibelius on records as is Arthur Rodzinski. This was presaged nearly two years ago, with the issuance of his brilliant reading of *Finlandia* (Columbia 11178-D). The subsequent appearance of the *Second Symphony* under Barbirolli's baton has only strengthened this impression.

How much, I wonder, do long-established interpretations influence our critical standards? It is a temptation, when we have lived long with one particularly fine conception, to accept that reading as a yardstick with which we judge all subsequent performances. Comparison of Rodzinski's reading with that of Koussevitzky (Victor set 474) is inevitable, not only because the Boston conductor's performance is today the only other one on records, but because Rodzinski's reading seems to bear the imprint of Koussevitzky's influence. This is not to imply that Rodzinski is an imitation, quite the contrary — for he does not hesitate to strike out along

his own paths when he believes they are right. His tempi for the second movement (the latter half of the first, according to the Koussevitzky labels) are considerably faster and accordingly less flexible. That I believe Koussevitzky's handling of this section emphasizes better the characteristic nationalism of the music does not make Rodzinski's reading any the less valid and interesting. Exception must be taken, however, to the final pages of this movement. After building up to a typically Sibelian outburst, with snorting brass, the orchestra mysteriously plays almost *piano* until the very final measures. Whether this inexplicable and incorrect *diminuendo* is actually due to Rodzinski's direction, I do not know, but to me the effect is distinctly unpleasant, and anti-climatic.

In the third movement (the second, on the Victor labels) Rodzinski adopts a slightly faster tempo, as did Kajanus, yet he does not achieve greater drive, and even sacrifices something of the bardic sweep of the score. To me, Koussevitzky's tempo is more effective, providing greater contrast with what has gone before. In the final movement, the parallel between the interpretations of Koussevitzky and Rodzinski is at moments startling, especially in the final chords, which are given identical treatment in both sets, and this in spite of the fact that these measures are the most enigmatic in the whole score, and that, as heard here, they are not played as written — the rhythm being altered.

The considerably older Boston set has been given the more life-like recording. The incredibly fine blend of tone achieved by the Boston players results in numerous subtleties lacking in the Cleveland group. It is strange, however, to find the reproduction of the new set so unresonant, when one remembers the acoustical excellence of Severance Hall as evidenced in other recordings; this is particularly apparent in the closing chords of the symphony.

The ultimate question of choice will depend to some extent on whether the purchaser will pay for five records in the Koussevitzky set, since here the filler is the three-sided *Pohjola's Daughter*, superbly played, or whether he prefers a four-record set offering as filler the less con-

sequential, single-sided *Praeludium* of Jaernefelt, tastefully set forth, thus making the Rodzinski set one dollar cheaper.

—Jerome Pastene

STRAUSS: *Don Juan, Opus 20*; played by the National Symphony Orchestra, direction of Hans Kindler. Victor set DM-914, two discs, price \$2.50.

▲ The National Symphony emerges successfully in recording. The reproduction here is certainly more richly resonant and the sounds of solo instruments and choirs are smoother than in the recent Columbia set made by Reiner and the Pittsburgh Symphony. But the latter is more vivid in its reproduction of high frequencies, and Reiner definitely proves himself a better exponent of Strauss than does Kindler. The Washington conductor gives a good account of the score, but he does not succeed in erasing the memory of Victor's earlier Fritz Busch performance. The latter is a more imaginative projection of the score; dating from 1937 it is naturally less opulent as a recording, but it is nonetheless enjoyable even today. One feels after listening to the present performance that Busch and Reiner understand better the relation of Strauss' music to the Lenau poem that inspired it. Kindler tends to sentimentalize the lyrical sections of the score. Further, he indulges in some ritards not indicated. Since Reiner's is the only set which matches this one in reproduction, perhaps it would be well to confine my comparisons to it. The assertive momentum indicated by the composer in the opening pages of the score is fully achieved by Kindler, but he does not realize the same glow or create the same quality of excitement that Reiner gets, nor does he equal the latter's finer pointing up of detail. Reiner's interpretation of the entire work is decidedly a more thorough savoring of its content. In the lyrical sections Reiner does not romanticize. Take, for example, the feminine theme played on the oboe (second side of the recording): there is more nobility in Reiner's treatment of this passage than in Kindler's. Further, the breaks in both the Reiner and Busch sets are preferable to those used here. I would not advise listeners to give



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up their Busch performance without making a careful comparison.

Of his hero, Lenau has said: "My Don Juan is no hot-blooded man eternally pursuing women. It is the longing in him to find a woman who is to him incarnate womanhood, and to enjoy, in the one, all the women on earth, whom he cannot as individuals possess. Because he does not find her, although he reels from one to another, at last Disgust seizes hold of him, and this Disgust is the Devil that fetches him." His disgust with himself, men, women and the world causes him to fight a duel with the avenging son of the Grand Commander and to throw away his sword so that his adversary might kill him. Strauss has done a notable job in his musical setting of the Lenau poem; it is a score that has stood the severe test of over-familiarity.

—P. H. R.

TCHAIKOVSKY: *Theme and Variations from Suite No. 3 in G, Opus 55*; played by the Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra of New York, direction of John Barbirolli. Columbia set X or MX-226, two discs, price \$2.50.

▲ Von Buelow first introduced the *Suite in G* to the public in January, 1885. Its success was immediate. The salon character of the first three movements probably appealed to 19th century listeners, but in recent years only the last movement, the *Theme and Variations*, have survived in the concert hall. This movement dominates its predecessors so completely, and is so sufficient unto itself, that the neglect of the rest of the work is entirely understandable.

Nearly a decade ago the late Sir Landon Ronald conducted this music for a recording that was issued by H.M.V. in England. Why it was never released in this country we do not know. Although the variations are cleverly devised, the work has always seemed to me to be a patchwork quilt of blatant colors and jagged contours rather than a successfully patterned, unified creation. This view is by no means shared by all, and those who admire this work go far in their praise of it. Thus, we find Edwin Evans in his book on the composer stating: "The variations stand in sheer plastic beauty above any modern set for orchestra, Elgar's *Enigma Variations* alone excepted." Since Evans wrote this in 1906, one cannot accuse him of overlooking Delius's superb variations of *Brigg Fair*, published in 1910. The theme of this composition is Russian in character and the various variations — a chorale, a ballade, a dance, a mazurka and an a la polacca — maintain the Slavic mood. Most of the variations are robust and blatant; one has the feeling that they could have been more successfully contrasted. Barbirolli gives this music an energetic performance. The effect of his exposition is exhilarating, but the celerity of his playing often exceeds that of Ronald's, in which there was frequently more broadening of line. Moreover, there is not the same precision of detail in the playing of the Philharmonic-Symphony as in the London Symphony. But since the

recording here is so much finer and more realistic in tonal quality, despite some muffled passages, there is no reason to suspect that anyone would wish to own the older version (even if it were available here) in preference to this one.

—P. H. R.

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS: *A London Symphony*; played by the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, direction of Eugene Goossens. Victor set DM-916, five discs, price \$5.50.

▲ There are few concertgoers who have heard this symphony played more than once who have not fallen under its spell. The disparagers of this work harp on its programmatic connotations, which are helpful to the listener's comprehension of the score but not wholly essential to its enjoyment. I recall the observations of a critic made shortly after the symphony's first performance in this country (it was introduced here in 1920 at a concert of the New York Symphony Society by Albert Coates). This critic contended that neither theories nor esthetics make a composer; others have sought inspiration from London streets and from rivers which play as prominent a part in the lives of men as the Thames, others have striven to glorify the historic city of London, but none have succeeded like Vaughan Williams. His genius gave him an insight into the eternal tides of life, into the melancholy of indigent and deserted streets, into the folly of youth, and the longing of age. The tolling of the clock, Big Ben, which all of us have heard auspiciously sounding in these ominous times, is symbolically used by Williams to exploit in this work, as one writer has said, "the brief, uneasy existence that is the greatest illusion of all." The bustle of the London streets, the Cockney's taunting voice, the world weariness of an old center, the far-away merriment of the slums, the march of the unemployed who are cold and hungry, and always the indomitable and calmly flowing Thames — all these are depicted in this score. Albert Coates has said that at the end we feel through this music the great deep soul of London — London as a whole, vast and unfathomable, teeming with bustle and life, awe-inspiring and relent-

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less, full of nostalgic memories — and at the end we are brought back to the beginning with the river—old Father Thames flowing calm and silent, as he has flowed through the ages, the keeper of many secrets, shrouded in mystery.

It is fitting that an American recording company honor an English composer of Williams' standing by a recording of his first mature work. The symphony, written in 1914 before the start of World War I, was first performed by the late Geoffrey Toye. A. E. F. Dickenson, in his analysis of the work in his book *An Introduction to the Music of R. Vaughan Williams* (The Musical Pilgrim series), tells us that apart from a few local details this is not a program symphony. "The composer has even himself suggested that 'Symphony by a Londoner' would be a better title." Speaking of the hesitancy of style in the writing, Dickenson says "the argumentative side of Walt Whitman's philosophy (which Stevenson noted as a defect in the poet's work) appears to have dogged Vaughan Williams in this symphony, making him alternately venturesome and retiring . . . like the city of its origin, the symphony is constructed from a mass of heterogeneous and seemingly incongruous material; and like London, again, it has been materially altered in certain places, since it was first planned . . . Yet, by steadily concentrating, as he has always done, upon the worth of the matter, rather than upon the neatness of the manner, the composer has achieved a wonderful unity of effect." Despite its faults, I have never grown tired of this symphony in the many years that I have known it, for beneath its surface is a nobility of purpose and expression. It is not the type of work that one would perhaps want repeated like a Mozart or a Beethoven symphony, yet it never fails to satisfy me whenever I play it.

Goossens has done a fine job in his performance of this work; by adopting somewhat livelier tempi he has achieved a greater unity of purpose and design than Sir Henry Wood did in his English Decca recording, which was never wholly satisfactory. And Victor has given the work a superb recording, which sets forth

the climaxes in a highly realistic and stimulating manner. The softer passages of the score also are done full justice to — witness the opening and closing sections. This is by far the feature set of the month, to my way of thinking.

—P. H. R.

WAGNER: *Siegfried* — *Forest Murmurs*; played by the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, direction of Fritz Reiner. Columbia disc 11831, price \$1.00.

▲ It must be all of a dozen years since a recording of this music has been issued domestically. To be sure, it is not one of the most important excerpts from the Wagnerian music dramas, but since the orchestral arrangement of the forest music from the second act of *Siegfried* forms a mood picture which has had wide favor in the concert hall, it seems strange that the recording companies have neglected it. In a way the music has the characteristics of a tone poem, and so ingeniously are the myriad voices of the forest pictured in the orchestra that the relation of the music to the opera need not be considered.

Reiner has tightened up the published version of this score; he omits a dozen bars of the opening and some of the repetitiousness of the woodbird, which is all to the good. His performance is full of life and suggests the forest scene in the radiance of full morning light. Some conductors tend to treat the music less objectively, with the result that the score does not hold together so well. The orchestral playing here is admirably incisive and clean-cut, and the recording has been effectively contrived.

—P. H. R.

Concerto

BACH: *Brandenburg Concerto No. 4 in G major* (5 sides); played by String Ensemble from the Curtis Institute of Music, Marian Head (solo violin), Alfred Mann and Anton Winkler (recorders), Edith Weiss-Mann (harpsichord), direction of Ezra Rachlin, and TELEMANN: *Bourée*; played by Edith

Weiss-Mann. Hargail Record Set 105, three 12-inch discs, price \$4.00. (Hargail Recorder Music Publishers, 72 Fifth Ave., New York City.)

▲ This is the first recording of a *Brandenburg Concerto* in the original instrumentation. The *flauto d'eco*, indicated in Bach's fourth *Brandenburg*, was in reality the treble recorder, also known as the *flute à bec* and the block flute. The enormous popularity of the recorder during the 16th and 17th centuries is attested by the consistent reference to the instrument in Shakespeare, Milton, Pepys, etc. There are some who disparage its tonal quality, yet in the past two decades there has been a revival of interest in this old instrument both in Europe and in this country. The movement for the revival of the folk dance in England and elsewhere has undoubtedly assisted the cause of the recorder. For it is not only a convenient way of playing the old tunes, but, as one writer has said, it is of all truly musical instruments the cheapest and the easiest to learn.

Of all Bach's six *Brandenburg* concertos, the fourth is perhaps the most cherishable. Its opening movement is filled with limpid grace and charm, its slow movement is the most poetic and intuitive of all the concertos' slow movements, and its finale is one of Bach's spontaneous and stimulating fugues. There is much to admire in this performance of the work. The recorder players are highly gifted, and Miss Head is an excellent solo violinist. In fact the ensemble is so excellent I can only hope they will be heard in another of these jolly works. The recording is well realized in the concerto, but in all fairness to the recorder players one feels they should have been featured a little more prominently. The low level of the reproduction in the Telemann piece, which is well played, causes an unnecessary surface noise.

—P. H. R.

Chamber Music

BEETHOVEN: *Quartet in E minor, Opus 59, No. 2*; played by the Coolidge

Quartet. Victor set DM-919, four discs, price \$4.50.

▲ It does not seem possible that the superb performance of this quartet by the Budapests (Victor set 340) needed to be duplicated. But duplications are not always displacements. After all, the Budapests are the Budapests, and most discriminating chamber music listeners would not think of replacing a recording by this ensemble simply to gain slightly superior mechanical reproduction. Set 340 dates from 1937, and belongs to the high fidelity grouping in the Victor catalogue according to the markings on the records. However, tonal quality alone tells the tale, and outside of a bit more bass than is necessary on modern machines (which can be controlled), this recording is entirely satisfactory to me. The recording of the present set is the best that the Coolidge ensemble has had to date, but in striving to create an illusion of tonal breadth — which this ensemble does not normally have — the recorders have been unwise, for this only accentuates the apathy of the performance. To be sure, the present players achieve technical precision, flawless intonation and an equitable realization of dynamics, but the emotional fervor of the work is by no means exploited. One turns to the Budapest recording, where a greater subtlety of shading and a richer and warmer tone are immediately apparent. In the lovely adagio, that movement in which Beethoven anticipated the pathos of Schubert, undeviating tonal exactitude does not make for emotional persuasiveness. Roismann's first violin lines are far more sensitively spun than those of Kroll. The subjectivity of the music finds its most comprehending players in the Budapest group. One feels that the Russian theme in the scherzo (this is the theme that Moussorgsky also used in the opening chorus of his *Boris*) lies closer to the hearts of the Budapest players than to the Coolidges', and in the rapid passage work throughout the score the sinuous and concurrent movement and expression of the music are more impressively represented in the older recording.

—P. H. R.

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HALVORSEN (after Handel): *Passacaglia*; played by Jascha Heifetz (violin) and William Primrose (viola). Victor disc 11-8151, price \$1.00.

▲ In making this arrangement of the last movement of Handel's *Harpsichord Suite No. 7 in G minor* (in its original form it is played by Landowska in Victor set M-593), the Norwegian composer-violinist Halvorsen laid himself open to much criticism from purists. However, the efficacy of his transcription is such that it has won a deserved place in the repertoire of the strings. It is a tremendously stimulating work, superbly written for the strings, and affords a real treat when performed by two highly talented artists.

Perhaps some readers own the recording of this work made all of a dozen years ago by the distinguished English artists, Albert Sammons and Lionel Tertis, or possibly the one made by Eddy Brown and Milton Katims (issued by Royale in 1940). Of these two performances the former was the more musicianly; the latter players rendered it too hurriedly and the viola part was frequently obscured by Brown's strident violin tone. Heifetz and Primrose give a tonally warmer performance than the two English musicians, one in which perfection of detail is almost miraculously achieved. But as fine as their performance is, it does not own the consanguinity of artistic purpose which was apparent in the Sammons-Tertis performance; moreover, Tertis's rugged tonal qual-

ity brought out the viola part in the rapid passages more effectively than Primrose's mellow tone does. Nevertheless, this is a choice rendition of the music, and one that deserves to be cherished by many listeners. If the reader has the mistaken idea that unaccompanied string playing is not enjoyable, he should hear this disc. The recording is excellent.

—P. H. R.

HAYDN (arr. Piatigorsky): *Divertimento*; played by Gregor Piatigorsky (cello) and Valentin Pavlovsky (piano). Columbia disc 11830-D, price \$1.00.

▲ Chamber music enthusiasts will probably remember (if they do not still possess) a recording of this work by Paul Gruemer and Anna Linde on Parlophone records. The artists played on the instruments of Haydn's time, the viola da gamba and the harpsichord. Recorded around 1930, it was carelessly released, as so many things were in those days, with the first two movements on a single disc, issued alone, and later the third movement showed up on the fourth face of a Handel sonata played by the same artists. Domestic Decca repressed the work in the same manner in its classical catalogue.

This is apparently one of the compositions that Haydn wrote for Nicolaus Esterhazy, who fancied himself as a performer on the viola di bordone, an instrument very similar to the viola da gamba. Believing that his prince would be flattered, Haydn learned to play this

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instrument himself, only to have his patron tell him none too pleasantly that he disapproved of the rivalry.

This little work is made up of three movements: a reflective opening adagio, a bucolic minuet, and a final allegro molto. Piatigorsky has shortened the latter considerably, if one accepts the Gruemmer-Linde recording as representing the authentic score. The whole composition is not of great importance, being exactly what its title suggests — a piece for diversion. Not even the famed Piatigorsky tone can make it of more consequence than it was originally planned. Haydn was not writing masterpieces when he turned out so many works for the prince's viola di bordone. There are no fewer than 175 compositions for this instrument in the catalogue of the composer. Needless to say, Piatigorsky gives this music a tasteful and well-styled performance; but I, for one, feel it is more suited to the viola da gamba and the harpsichord than to the modern cello and piano. The recording here is good.

—P. H. R.

Violin

JOSEPH SZIGETI IN GYPSY MELODIES — *Slavonic Dance No. 1 in G minor*; *Slavonic Dance No. 2 in E minor* (Dvorak-Kreisler) (disc 17338-D); *Hungarian Rhapsody, No. 3 from Scènes de la Csarda* (Hubay) (disc 17339-D); *Intermezzo from Hary Janos* (Kodaly-Szigeti); *Hungarian Dance No. 5* (Brahms - Szigeti) (disc 17340-D); played by Joseph Szigeti (violin) and Andor Foldes (piano). Columbia 10-inch set M or MM-513, price \$2.75.

▲ It is the fashion for recording companies to attach fancy titles to albums these days. Whether or not all of the selections herein are justifiably classified as gypsy music must remain for a musicologist to decide. It is all of a decade since Szigeti's first recordings of these *Slavonic Dances* were issued by Columbia. Made in Europe before the violinist had appeared in this country, they gave some of us a first insight into his splendid artistry. But as fine as those earlier recorded per-

formances were, these are even better. Szigeti's tone has become more mellow in recent years, and his playing is characterized by a suavity which was not so apparent ten years ago. For the record, it should be pointed out that the *Slavonic Dance in G minor* is not No. 1, but No. 8 of the first series; but it may be that the Kreisler arrangements are published as Nos. 1 and 2.

The most interesting excerpt in the album, to our way of thinking, is the Hubay *Rhapsody*. Hubay was Szigeti's teacher. A brilliant violinist himself, his compositions have always been regarded as particularly violinistic. The present rhapsody is a show piece, technically difficult and rhythmically tricky. Szigeti's faultless performance lends it more distinction than it really owns.

Since the *Intermezzo* from *Hary Janos* has no significance as far as the play is concerned, it lends itself satisfactorily to the treatment Szigeti has given it here. It is music suggestive of Hungarian folk or gypsy influence. As for the Brahms *Hungarian Dance*, that surely needs no comment, other than the assurance that Szigeti plays it with highly appreciable artistry. The recording here does justice to both the violinist and his competent accompanist.

—P. G.

DVORAK: *Humoresque*; and **SCHUMANN:** *Trauemerei*; played by Nathan Milstein (violin) and Artur Balsam (piano). Columbia disc 17337-D, price \$1.00

▲ Both pieces are transcriptions of piano works but we daresay they are as familiar today in the violin arrangements as they are in the original versions. The name of the transcriber is not given on the label, an inexcusable omission on the part of any phonograph company.

Milstein plays both compositions with rare suavity of tone. It is a pleasure to hear a violinist perform such hackneyed material as this eschewing sentimentalism. These are model performances for the young student of the violin as well as those music lovers who cherish this sort of musical material. The recording is good.

—P. G.

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Keyboard

(BRAHMS: *Waltzes* (For Four Hands),
Op. 39, Nos. 1 through 5; played by
Vitya Vronsky and Victor Babin. Victor
10-inch disc 10-1021, price 75c.

▲ Just why the artists selected the first
five of the 16 waltzes of Opus 39 is con-
jectural; there is the suggestion that they
have recorded them all and that the others
will follow in due course. We have a
most satisfactory version of the entire
group played by Anatole Kitain in the
two-hand arrangement, and if Babin and
Vronsky complete the set we'll have a
similarly satisfactory version in the four-
hand arrangement. Of all the duo-pianists
on records, these two artists seem to us
the most consistently gratifying.

—P. G.

TAYLOR (arr. Courboin): *Dedication*
from *Through the Looking Glass*;
played by Charles Courboin on the
Organ of the American Academy of

Arts and Letters, New York City. Victor
10-inch disc 10-1007, price 75c.

▲ Courboin has made a tasteful arrange-
ment of the charming opening of Deems
Taylor's popular *Through the Looking*
Glass Suite. The organ used here lends
itself well to recording, and all who ad-
mire Courboin's unexciting type of organ
playing should derive pleasure from this
disc.

—P. G.

WEINBERGER: *Schwanda* — *Polka and*
Fugue; played by Vitya Vronsky and
Victor Babin (2-piano team). Victor disc
11-8189, price \$1.00.

▲ The arrangement of the popular ex-
cerpts from *Schwanda* was made by the
composer. As effective as it proves for a
a two-piano composition, we find it more
telling in its original orchestral dress. The
material is not of great consequence, al-
though the fugue is highly enjoyable, and
it has always been apparent that the com-
poser's skillful instrumentation has had
much to do with its success. Vronsky and
Babin do justice to the occasion and the
recording is excellently devised.

—P. G.

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CARL ENGEL, Editor

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▲ The eminent musicologist, Curt Sachs, who compiled and directed that valuable musical series called *L'Anthologie Sonore*, has begun here a similar series on keyboard music. The value of these discs in the classroom and in the study of the growth of piano music cannot be minimized. Perhaps not all of the music will appeal to the music lover as pleasurable listening, but there can be no question that any who acquire this and subsequent albums will acquire a liberal education in the development of keyboard music. Professor Sachs says that the music in this album is not "ancient music", stale, dusty, and at best a curio for historically minded snobs. "It is no more 'ancient' than Rembrandt's paintings or Gothic cathedrals. It is music, and excellent music too." When he tells us that it is written in the style of generations past, he places his finger on the basic reason why some will pass it by; for not all musical listeners are interested in music of the past, despite the excellence of the work judged in the light of its or even our own time, just as many people do not like Rembrandt paintings or Gothic cathedrals. We might wish that musical listeners would investigate more old music, but we cannot force those who refuse to apprehend the musical values of a bygone day to do so. I believe that the material in this set which would have the widest appeal is to be found on discs 106 and 107, although the three

selections of Charbonnières are also worth investigating.

Miss Marlowe plays competently here, but not as stimulatingly as Wanda Landowska. The recording is satisfactory, but there is a suggestion in the harpsichord tone that it would have benefited by a more resonant studio. As in other Bost sets, there is a ridge between selections on each record face which prevents the needle from passing freely from one composition to another. We have found that with a very sharp knife one can scrape off about two or three inches of that ridge and thereby make it possible for the needle to continue on its course unaided.

We are certain that many will join us in awaiting future albums in this series with considerable interest.

—P. H. R.

Voice

BACH: *Schafe koennen sicher Weiden* from the Birthday Cantata — *Was mir beragt*; sung by Katherine Harris (soprano), with Alfred Mann and Anton Winkler (recorders), Edith Weiss-Mann (harpsichord), and Lucy Weiss (viola da gamba). Hargail 10-inch disc MW-104, price \$1.05.

▲ In October, 1937, Victor issued this air sung by Rita Ginster with an accompaniment of two flutes and piano. As our reviewer stated in 1937, Ginster, with her impeccable sense of style, does miracles despite an obviously mediocre voice. Miss Harris is more gifted vocally than Ginster, but she does not convey the same authority in delivery. Yet, there is an old-world charm to this record which deserves to be heard in others of its kind. The old instruments are particularly attractive behind the voice, and the pastoral quality of the air is substantiated far better by recorders than by flutes. And there is a more resilient bass line from the harpsichord, re-enforced, as it was in Bach's time, by the viola da gamba. We should have a whole album of Bach and Handel airs arranged in this manner; the blend of tone is infinitely more ingratiating than what we usually hear. This little disc could have been far more successful; un-

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fortunately it was recorded at too low a level, with the usual resultant surface noise which disturbs the quality of musical sound. However, there will undoubtedly be many who will enjoy its authenticity of ensemble.

This air is as gem of purest ray serene, as our reviewer said in 1937. It was written by Bach during his Weimar period, and was intended to be sung in a hunting lodge to celebrate the birthday of Duke Christian of Saxe-Weissenfels. The words of the air are: "Happy flock of sheep, wandering in safety while the shepherds keep watch. If our sovereign will rule wisely, peace and plenty will always flow, and the land will reap its rewards."

—P. G.

MENDELSSOHN: *Auf Fluegeln des Gesanges*, and *Morgengruess*; sung by Lotte Lehmann (soprano) with Paul Ulanowsky at the piano. Columbia 10-inch disc 17344-D, price 75c.

▲ dozen years ago Lotte Lehmann made a recording for Parlophone of the ubiquitous *On Wings of Song*, which Decca repressed in its classical catalogue. Many lieder fans regard this as the best version of this song, despite its unattractive orchestral background. Certainly it offers some of the soprano's loveliest singing. On the present disc the voice is more mature, less resilient, yet once again this singer emerges, in our estimation, more successful in her recording of this song than any other who has essayed it on records. It is the unaffected ardor and simplicity of style with which Mme. Lehmann approaches and renders a song like this which places her interpretation apart from all others. But we believe that her voicing of the unfamiliar *Morning Greeting* will prove even more satisfying to most listeners. Hearing Mme. Lehmann sing this song we wonder why it has been neglected, but perhaps if we heard someone else less gifted than she we would find the song of less consequence. Of such ability is Mme. Lehmann's artistry. The recording of the voice here is far better than that of the piano; we would have liked more piano tone behind the singer.

—P. G.

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A GRACE MOORE PROGRAM —
Psyché (Paladilhe); *Si mes vers avaient des ailes* (Hahn) (10-inch disc 10-1018); *Phidylé* (Duparc); *Herodiade — Il est doux* (Massenet) (disc 11-8258); *Manon — Adieu notre petite table* and *Gavotte* (Massenet) (disc 11-8259); sung by Grace Moore (soprano) with Victor Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Wilfred Pelletier. Victor set M-918, price \$3.25.

▲ Writing in the New York Herald Tribune last February, Virgil Thomson aptly said: "Miss Moore's musical gifts are modest but well schooled. Her voice, once almost overbrilliant, has lost its surface glamour, but none of its real fire; and Miss Moore has improved considerably of late years at the handling of it. It always had more flame in it than sheer beauty. Nowadays this warmth is supplanted by a technical assurance that is none the less welcome for being, alas, all too rare among vocalists of the French school." After listening to the selections in this album, we are in complete agreement with Mr.

Thomson's summation of the singer's vocal gifts. The artistry here is studied rather than spontaneous, but the schooling is good and vocally Miss Moore gives in all except one case — the Duparc song — appealing and effective renditions of her chosen material.

The discriminating listener may prefer the cooler beauty and the more intellectual sensuality of Maggie Teyte's singing of the Paladilhe and Hahn songs. For one thing, they are preferable sung to piano accompaniments. But Miss Moore brings a lovely quality of tone and fine feeling to her singing of *Psyché*. The Hahn song is spoilt for us by a Hollywoodish orchestral accompaniment, but the singer does justice to the vocal line. One has but to turn to Panzera's exquisitely nuanced rendition of *Phidylé* to understand how much more suitable this song is to a man's voice.

Miss Moore's operatic singing is founded upon a great tradition. Mr. Thomson point this out in his article from which we quoted above. The singer has studied all of her French roles with Mary Garden. This is third *Il est doux* in as many months, and the most successful from the standpoint of dramatic feeling. The fire missing from Bampton's performance and the dramatic sweep absent from Sten's rendition are both present here. But Miss Moore indulges in rhythmic distortions which neither of the other singers is guilty of. A student would do better to use Bampton's performance as a model than this one.

One of Miss Moore's most successful roles is Manon. Her rendition of both arias is accomplished with style and vocal charm, even though her rubato in the *Gavotte* is questionable.

The singer has been given excellent support by Mr. Pelletier and the orchestra, and the recording is splendidly realized.

—P. G.

RUSSIAN FOLK SONGS; sung by Alexander Kipnis with Balalaika Orchestra. Victor 10-inch set, five discs, \$4.25.

▲ In selecting and arranging ten folk songs of his native Russia, Kipnis has chosen material which has sufficient variety to retain the listener's interest through-

out the set. What better compliment could we pay the singer than to say we played the ten songs in sequence without our interest lagging at any time? Victor has provided a booklet with translations, and this of course enhances the listeners' enjoyment of any group of songs sung in a foreign tongue. Kipnis' smooth, rich bass has never sounded better on records; he sings here with appreciable simplicity and conviction. One has the feeling that these songs all mean much to him and that they stir him deeply, as folk songs should stir a singer who has undoubtedly known them from his childhood on. Perhaps some of these songs would be more effective in performance by a group of singers, but the fact that Kipnis has voiced them all with a sincere artlessness, relying on the natural beauty of his voice rather than sought-after interpretative effects to put them over, makes his renditions highly estimable.

It seems hardly necessary to point out the timeliness of this set, although it might be observed that perhaps not all of these songs are still sung in the Russia of today. The most appealing songs to us are the oldest ones, *The Mulberry Tree* (disc 10-1016) and *The Ringlet* (disc 10-1017); the first dating back to medieval times and using the word *lu-li* — familiar in so many old English songs —; and the second based on a Ukrainian dance tune of the 18th century. The first two, *The Recruit's Farewell* and *Soldier's Song* (disc 10-1013), are tunes one would hear sung in the streets of Russia, and their popularity may well be furthered by this recording. Two Siberian songs, *The Innocent Siberian Exile* and *Lullaby* (for a condemned man) (disc 10-1014), are on the lugubrious side. But the old revolutionary tune *Dubnushka* and *The Troika Coachman's Love Song* (disc 10-1015) have their individual appeal; the former has always been a favorite of ours. On the reverse side of *The Mulberry Tree* is a genuinely beautiful song called *Night*, which was a great favorite of the late Chaliapin. Kipnis does notable justice to this selection. *Maiden of my Heart*, on the reverse of *The Ringlet*, is a newly ar-

anged version of a song by Dargomijsky.

The use of the Balalaika Orchestra was most appropriate, although one would probably hear most of these songs sung to an accordion accompaniment in Russia. The recording is excellently accomplished.

— P. H. R.

BATTLE HYMN OF THE REPUBLIC (Julia Ward Howe); **STAR SPANGLED BANNER** (Francis Scott Key) (disc 11-8221); **AMERICA** (Samuel Francis Smith); **THE PLEDGE TO THE FLAG**; **BEAT! BEAT! DRUMS!** (Walt Whitman); recited by Helen Hayes, with Victor Concert Orchestra, male chorus, under the direction of Roy Shields. Victor set M-909, two discs, price \$2.50.

▲ Victor calls this album *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory, America's Living Words of Faith*. It is a strange arrangement, in our estimation, of several of America's patriotic songs. The music is written and arranged by Kurt Weill, a German composer who came to this country in 1935 and later took out his citizenship papers. We may be termed chauvinistic, when we say that an American-born composer should have been chosen for this job, but frankly, we don't like what Mr. Weill has done here to our patriotic ballads. Unquestionably, others *will* like what he has done, and since this is Miss Hayes' album set, it can be taken for granted that she favored the musical backgrounds. The noted American actress uses a style between recitation and chanting; at moments it might be called "song-speech." Her every word is clearly enunciated and she brings all her dramatic experience to play in effecting the climaxes of the various poems. But only in one does Miss Hayes escape artificiality, in our estimation, perhaps because in this selection the music of Weill seems most appropriate, and that is in the Walt Whitman poem from his *Drum-Beats*. It has always seemed to us that our own patriotic ballads are most stirring when sung by a chorus of the people; say what you will about the tunes to which these poems are sung, they have become so familiar to most of us that divorcing them from the familiar melodies

September, 1942

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gives the effect of rewriting a page of history. The recording here is excellent.

—P.G.

GERSHWIN: *Selections from Porgy and Bess* — Volume Two, Decca Album No. A-283. Price \$2.75.

▲ The revival this season of *Porgy and Bess* has again brought to the attention of the American public this arresting and strikingly individual work. Possibly the most truly valuable legacy that Gershwin left us, this score now sounds finer, if anything, than it did when the opera was first produced seven years ago. In keeping with the current interest in the work, Decca has very wisely issued an album

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containing material not included in their first album. Here, as in the first volume, are members of the cast, including Todd Duncan, Anne Brown, Edward Matthews, Helen Dowdy, William Woolfolk, Avon Long (a new "Sporting Life"), and the Eve Jessye Choir, and the orchestra is again under the direction of Alexander Smallens.

Two of the most attractive numbers in the opera, unaccountably omitted from Volume I, are here: *A Woman Is a Sometime Thing*, sung superbly by that truly fine artist, Edward Matthews, and *There's a Boat Dat's Leavin' Soon for New York* (hitherto unrecorded except for a very inadequate semi-private version by Ramona and an impossible dance recording) by Avon Long and Anne Brown. One of the most unforgettable passages in the opera is the haunting street cries in the second act. These are happily included here, the *Strawberry Woman's Call* by Helen Dowdy and the *Crab Man's Call* by William Woolfolk. *It Takes a Long Pull to Get There* by Matthews, *What You Want Wid Best?* by Brown and Duncan, and the comparatively banal *I Loves You Porgy* by Brown and Duncan, make up the remainder of the set.

—H. V. N.

MOUSSORGSKY: *Child's Evening Prayer*; and *Song of the Flea*; sung by Nelson Eddy (baritone) with orchestra accompanied by Robert Armbruster. Columbia 10-inch disc 17312-D, price 75c.

▲ For the record it can be said that Mr. Eddy is in better voice here than in some of his recent issues. But, the baritone's superficial treatment of both songs leaves us unimpressed with his vocal accomplishments. Too, the orchestral backgrounds given the baritone are decidedly lacking in finesse and tonal resonance. The reader should not get the idea that we dislike the singer, for such is not the case; there was a time when our admiration of Nelson Eddy was considerable, but there is little substantiation today of the artistry of this singer as we knew it before he found success in Hollywood.

Igor Gorin has given us a better version of the *Child's Evening Prayer* on Victor disc 4529, and no record collection should

be without the superb Chaliapin performance of the *Song of the Flea*. —P. G.

* * *

Several sets issued this month were not received in time for review in this issue. They will be appraised next month.

IN THE POPULAR VEIN

Owing to the fact that Mr. Van Norman has been on a vacation he was unable to get his notes to us in time for this issue. Next month he promises to deliver extra copy, and to look back over the popular issues of the major companies for the past two months. It might have been possible for one of the staff to have pinch-hit for Mr. Van Norman, but unfortunately the record companies don't make it easy for us to do that. Only Victor sends in popular discs for review. And hearing popular hits in dealers' shops is not as easy as some might think.

However, dance records haven't been very exciting of late. The end of summer is not the time for this sort of thing, says one jazz specialist to whom we spoke.

Out of several Victor sets, two recently issued deserve mention. There's fine teamwork in the singing of the Radio City Music Hall Glee Club (set P-126) which will not only please admirers of the group who have visited the big movie house but others who go in for this type of singing. Naturally, the boys have their own arrangements (who doesn't these days?), but the group is well trained and it boasts a lot of fine solo voices. The selections include *Ol' Man River*, *All the Things You Are*, *Perfidia*, a couple of Russian Folk Songs, and a Spiritual.

Victor's set of Irving Berlin's *This Is the Army* (set P-131) is a good job, but it's got to compete with the Decca set made by the original company, now playing in New York City. If you haven't seen the show and just want the tunes well sung and played Victor's album will fill the bill. But if you've got memories of the show and can't shake them, well naturally you'll be wanting to compare the two albums.

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